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Temporary clusters and communities of practice in the creative economy: festivals as temporary knowledge networks

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Temporary clusters and communities of practice in the creative economy: festivals as temporary knowledge networks

Abstract

The paper explores the role of art festivals as platforms for knowledge and network development in the creative industries and creative policy intervention using the case of a small UK street art festival (Fuse Festival in Medway). The analysis provides a broader perspective on the current research and debate on the impact and role played by arts festivals in local economic and cultural development - which usually concentrate on either their socio-economic impact on local communities - to focus instead of their role in building knowledge communities and communities of practice. The results highlight the key role played by the festival in supporting and commissioning artistic work. They also expose the temporary and explorative nature of many artistic practices and the role of interaction with audiences and other creative producers. Following a network perspective the findings highlight the role of temporary clusters in shaping career opportunities for artists but also in drawing new pathways for local economic development for contexts undergoing regeneration.

Keywords:

Temporary clusters; knowledge networks; learning by doing; festivals; creative economy

Introduction

The paper aims to bridge the understanding of working practices and economic development in the creative and cultural industries (CCIs) with new network and relational perspectives. Research on CCIs has grown significantly in the past two decades from the first policy definition provided by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in 1998 centred on the importance of individual talent, creativity and skills to a more complex understanding of cultural production. While this first definition was originally from the UK, the growth of policy and academic work has expanded internationally and it is now a global field of research. Extensive research has been conducted on creative and cultural work in the economic geography (Christopherson 2002; Comunian 2009), cultural production chains and clusters (Scott and Power 2004; Chapain and Comunian 2010) and creativity-led urban development (Chapain and Comunian 2009) very little research has focused on the role of networks and temporary events.

While explicit reference is limited, it is acknowledged broadly that networks play a vital role in the micro-processes and micro-changes taking place over time in a range of creative and cultural context (Lambooy 2002; Comunian 2011). Closely connected with complexity thinking (Martin and Sunley 2007) this perspective has allowed for a more in-depth understanding of the non-linear interconnections that influence and undermine local economic development (Comunian and Mould 2014; Comunian 2011). This paper aims to specifically focus on the development of knowledge networks and flows (Bathelt, Malmberg, and Maskell 2004; Maskell, Bathelt, and Malmberg 2006) and learning practices in temporary clusters (Maskell, Bathelt, and Malmberg 2006; Bathelt and Schuldt 2008) and their impact on local creative practitioners and localised creative policies in the UK.

The paper is structured in three parts. Firstly, we offer a review of the literature, specifically bridging the literature on temporary clusters and with the literature on the role of festivals in

the CCIs development and creative knowledge networks. Secondly, we introduce the case study of Fuse Festival in Medway (UK) and the methodology used to understand its impact in the knowledge and learning practice of creative and cultural practitioners. The third part presents the research findings articulated in the role of festival in the CCIs production ecosystem; knowledge network co-evolution and learning within and beyond the festival and the value of festivals in creating new paths to local creative development from a policy perspective. The conclusions highlight the policy implications of the findings and the need for further research.

Knowledge networks, learning and sociality in temporary clusters

The literature on learning and knowledge communities is very broad and has been a topic of extensive research across economic geography and organisational studies (for a review McKelvey 1999). This paper is specifically interested in the role of knowledge networks and learning as it focuses on place and shared-spaces where learning and knowledge exchange evolve and take place. While the traditional literature acknowledges the strong relationship between individual and collective learning and focuses specifically on the work context (Fenwick 2008), it is important to acknowledge the role of place and temporality in the development of individual and collective learning (MacKinnon et al. 2009). We highlight here some key perspectives on learning and their relevance within a network perspective. Firstly, the role of ‘individual knowledge acquisition’, this is particularly connected to the idea that alongside codified knowledge (which is easily transferable) there are sets of practice and knowledge that are tacit and hard to teach and transfer (Gertler 2003). Co-location and time is very meaningful here to allow acquisition and transfer and an evolutionary perspective specifically highlights the role played by patterns, institutional, cultural and behavioural lock-ins (Barnes, Gartland, and Stack 2004) in allowing or shaping knowledge

acquisition. Secondly, ‘sense-making and reflective dialogue’, this is particularly relevant as knowledge creation is part of a co-evolution dynamic in which feedback from peers is pivotal to new knowledge development: “the collective is viewed as a prompt for individual critical reflection, a forum for sharing meaning and working through conflicting meanings among individuals to create new knowledge” (Fenwick, 2008, p. 232). Again shared spaces and time play a key role in explaining the shared knowledge as the extensive literature on clusters highlights (Giuliani 2007). It is interesting to include amongst these perspectives on learning also the ‘communities of practice’ concept of Wenger (Wenger 1998, p. 1), that is “communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly”. Although this is a very broad and fluid definition, which can be applied both within and outside organisations, a key feature of communities of practice is that they are not stable or static but evolve and change and they are also rarely place bound. Although the communities of practice approach has many limits (Roberts 2006) – especially in relation to the role played by trust, power and structures – it remains a useful framework to understand motivations and engagement amongst practitioners, especially around temporary knowledge communities. Another key dimension of research on learning is the importance of co-participation or co-emergence (Comunian and Alexiou 2015). The focus here is on “mutual interactions and modification between individual actors, their histories, motivations and perspectives, and the collective” (Fenwick, 2008, p.236). The study of micro-interactions between members of the network and their connections / relationship can provide a better understanding of macro-level outcomes (Brown and Eisenhardt 1997; Comunian 2011).

As the literature overview highlights, networks and shared connections are cornerstones of knowledge communities and learning. Therefore, the study of the range of networks and their strength or weakness (Granovetter 1973) becomes paramount in developing a better

understanding of the evolution of local production systems. Interestingly, the role of networks and knowledge exchange has also been a focus in the literature on the nature of creative work, where temporary, project-based structures are common in different creative sectors (Ettlinger 2003; Blair 2003). In these sectors multiple roles and job handling are the norm, with people defining themselves with multiple professional identities (Gornostaeva and Campbell 2012). Therefore, engaging with processes of learning and networks in CCIs is pivotal to gain a better understanding of the sector.

Knowledge in time and space: Temporary and cyclical clusters

One important feature of the way knowledge and expertise is developed is related to ‘tacit knowledge’ (Polanyi, 1958). Tacit knowledge is sticky (often linked to a person or a place/organisation) and learning cannot happen in a codified way (e.g. through a manual or an explanation) but is transferred through practice, observation, doing or sharing. There is a wealth of literature that considers the role of these important dynamics and of course time and space play a key role as they often imply a co-presence and co-location (Lundvall and Johnson 1994). The concept of ‘learning-by-doing’ highlights the need for demonstration and practice to be shared (Arrow 1962) but also the concept of ‘learning-by-interacting’ (Lundvall 1992) underlines the role played by exchange and feedback. In particular we see short-term interactions (which are often repeated in time) being part of project-based ecologies (Grabher 2002) when work is commissioned and diverse skills come together. In particular, some authors have considered how ‘clusters’ can be understood not only as a permanent geographical co-location but also in temporary forms (Bathelt and Schuldt 2008; Maskell, Bathelt, and Malmberg 2006).

A network-based approach is key to the understanding of arts and cultural development (Potts 2007). While the generic advantage of using network-based approached has been widely

acknowledged (Glückler 2007) less attention has been placed to the nature of network relation and their difference, evolution and development, with exception to the work of Grabher (Grabher 2004, 2006).

In the literature there is a key focus on investigating the difference in strength and value of ties and connections (Antcliff, Saundry, and Stuart 2007; Burt 2004) , however, there is a certain agreement in reference to the fact that different kind of connections (and their relative strength or weakness) can all play different roles for individuals. In particular Grabher (2004) considered specifically work in the CCIs and developed a different typology of networks for creative workers (table 1). This is important as it highlights the range of connections and their shifting from professional to private and from long-lasting to ephemeral connections. It is also important to notice that what is shared is also relevant. In some cases it is specific know-how (connectivity) in others it is just a sharing of contacts (sociality). However, what Grabher (2004) does not account for is the shifting of the nature of networks and connection with the development of the local context and its geography of relations, which will be explored in our case study.

Table 1: Type of personal networks and ties characteristics (author's elaboration from Grabher, 2004, p. 115)

	Communality	Sociality	Connectivity
Nature and basis of ties	Ties are lasting and intense, often based on common history.	Ties are ephemeral but intense. They build on a professional complementary	Ties are ephemeral and also weak, built on a basic common interest
Social dimension and governance of the relation	The relationship is private cum professional and is built on trust	The relationship is professional cum private and governed by forms of networked reputation	The relationship is mainly professional and governed by a professional ethos

Contents and focus of the exchange	It is relationship-oriented and the content exchanged is experience	The relation is often career-oriented and one main focus is networks and know-whom	The connection is often task-oriented and the focus is the know-how
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Of course in general networks and learning are set in specific times and spaces. However, we can argue that in the context of performing arts and festivals, time and space play are of paramount importance as time and space are the building blocks of the performance itself (Meador et al. 2004). Temporary clusters play also a specific role as they account for the complexity of overlapping spaces and actors but as Power and Jansson (2008) argue they are spaces that become cyclical and “can be reproduced, re-enacted, and renewed over time” (Power and Jansson 2008, p. 424) becoming not only temporary but cyclical clusters. The authors highlight this temporary event have a great impact on the structure of work, industries, networks and market and their development in specific regional contexts.

Are festivals also knowledge communities? Researching festivals as temporary & cyclical clusters

Many authors have reported a surge in the number of festivals throughout Europe (Smith and Jenner 1998; Quinn 2005) and have related this ‘festivalisation’ to several factors. Firstly, from the perspective of cultural economics this is consistent with the observed growth in cultural consumption and experience goods, which in turn is associated with increased disposable income and increased levels of educational attainment. From a local policy perspective, many authors argue that underlying economic forces and expected economic benefits act on cities to invest in festivals in order to attract investment, visitors or improve their image (Robertson and Wardrop 2004; Richards and Wilson 2004). Others focus on the importance of festivals in terms of their role in community celebration (Quinn 2005) and see

their historical origins and their impact on social cohesion through the potential they offer for shared experience and cultural exchange.

Given these motivations, it is unsurprising that much academic research on festivals has concentrated on assessing their economic and social impacts. The economic impacts also reflect a festival's potential to attract tourists (O'Sullivan and Jackson 2002) and therefore to bring new money into the local economy (Crompton and McKay 1994). They are often seen as potential drivers of local development especially in places not known to attract visitors (Gibson et al. 2010). Other studies focus on a festival's role in re-branding or regenerating a locale, specifically looking at pride in place, social cohesion and the participation of specific social groups (Quinn 2005). Festivals are displays of social and cultural identity (O'Sullivan and Jackson 2002) which therefore reinforce the connections and shared values within a community (Crespi-Vallbona and Richards 2007). Further studies link this with the development of 'social capital' (Arcodia and Whitford 2006; Rao 2001) and increase in 'cultural capital' (Snowball and Willis 2006).

While the research looking at all these external impacts is very rich and diverse, there is almost no research available which examines the impact of festivals on one of their core stakeholders: the participating artists. The only work on this specific topic is that published by Glow and Caust (2010) on the impact of Adelaide Fringe Festival on its artists. They used interviews and focus groups with participating artists to reveal what benefit they thought they gained from taking part. They identified a series of activities and services that the festival provided to artists, such as newsletters, making the most of media coverage, free listing in the festival guide etc. They also considered the importance that the Fringe Festival played through inviting producers to attend who might recruit new acts to add to their own programmes for touring and commissions. The main benefits experienced by artists were summarised by Glow and Caust (2010, p. 419) as:

- Entrepreneurialism: “the festival encouraged an entrepreneurial approach to the task of producing and presenting work”(Glow and Caust 2010, p. 419)
- Branding: allowed artists to increase their visibility and credibility amongst producers and audiences
- Practising the craft: helped “to build the respondents’ sense of purpose and identity as artists” (Glow and Caust 2010, p. 419)
- A Launching Pad: gave an opportunity to artists to test work and develop their craft and career
- Diverse Programming: linked to the ability of the festival to attract national and international work, commercial and non-commercial work and to create a balanced and varied programme.

Therefore, while in other sectors the literature on business fairs and temporary exhibitions especially focuses on the knowledge dynamics created, literature on festival has widely ignored these dynamics. However, many of the knowledge dynamics described can be considered relevant for the kind of knowledge networks and learning that take place at arts festivals. Bathelt and Schuldt (2008) in particular consider two sets of interactions within the context of temporary fairs, and this can be understood also in the context of festivals. Firstly, they consider vertical interactions: this mainly corresponds to interactions, which involve customers or suppliers. In a festival context this can be interaction with audiences (in reference to satisfaction), interaction with artists involved or contributing to the company’s work but also interaction with other festival directors, funders and promoters attending the festival. Secondly, they consider horizontal interactions: relates to interactions which involve other companies or competitors. In the festival these could be interactions with other artists/creative companies.

In an evolutionary perspective, the research of Bathelt and Schuldt (2008) also highlights the importance of contacts and exchanges taking place for the future development of companies. In particular they highlight the importance of learning through comparison and observation. It is interesting to notice how in other fields the literature on temporary and cyclical clusters has developed to provide a broader framework to how knowledge develops and moves in space, while in relation to the CCIs there has been very little attention to the role played by temporary events in comparison with traditional spatial clustering (Pratt 2004).

The paper aims to consider the role of art festival in the CCIs and understand the role of evolving networks within this temporary clustering.

Case study & Methodology

The paper uses the case study of a local regional festival to explore the role of knowledge networks and interaction in the development of collaborative creative work but also local economic development. *Fuse Medway Festival (Fuse)* is a recently established free outdoor arts festival which takes place in Medway (Kent) each June. It started in 2008/2009 under the direction of its first artistic director, Kate Hazel and between 2011 and 2013 it has been directed by Lelia Greci, so it can still be considered as an ‘emerging festival’. *Fuse* is a week-end of street and performing arts including performances from local, UK-wide and international artists. It is funded and managed by Medway City Council and receives funding from the Arts Council England (through an ACE Grant for the Arts award) in the region of £100,000.

As the then festival director explains, artistically the festival aims to give local communities and visitors “*opportunities to engage with arts that are of really high standard*” . For the local council it is about place-making “*to show that Medway is a very dynamic place and a place where people may want to move to, and students may want to come and study. And a*

place where they may want to live after they have graduated” (Interview with Lelia Greci, June 18, 2011).

However, alongside these goals, there are other objectives that the festival aims to achieve, in particular *“supporting local creatives and providing them with opportunities [...] by contracting them whenever possible and by offering a programme of commissioning every year”* (Interview with Lelia Greci, June 18, 2011).

Therefore, while another impact study might aim to measure the impact of *Fuse* in place-making or in engaging the local community, this research was specifically focused on the impact of *Fuse* on the artists taking part in the festival – one of the festival’s goals and priorities. Overall, *Fuse* is a small festival with a growing reputation and aims to become one of UK’s most important performing arts festivals for street artists. It is free and this reflects its socio-cultural agenda with respect to engaging the local community and bringing new opportunities for engagement in the arts to a range of demographics (from young children to disadvantaged groups). It is also committed to raising the profile of Medway as a destination and particularly with respect to the creative economy and growing local talent.

Methodology, data and sample

In 2011, 25 artists or cultural organizations were directly involved in the festival via commissions (to present original work) and bookings (to tour previous work). While further artists and collaboration took part, our research was specifically focused on these 25 artists and cultural organisations. The list of artists/cultural organisations was supplied by *Fuse* organisers, but was also publically available through the *Fuse* programme.

This paper reports on the use of two different research methodologies. In order to achieve a quantitative overview of the participants and their work and the networks they engaged with at the festival we used a survey (with a social network analysis component) that was sent to all 25 artists/creative companies. Out of the 25 artists and cultural organizations contacted 24

responded and returned a completed questionnaire. Alongside the survey, we carried out semi-structured qualitative interviews with half of the respondents (12) artists/creative practitioners and one with the current festival director. The interviews explored the impact of *Fuse* (and other festivals) on the development of an artist's practice and a career in the creative sector.

The artists and artistic companies who responded to this survey were mainly from the South of England (only one artist/company from the rest of UK), amongst the Southern companies involved there was a strong presence from the broader South East (11), followed by the local Medway (5) and Kent (3) areas and finally the South West (5).

Younger companies and organisations (less than 6 years old) were well represented at the festival, accounting for 50% of the organisations involved. The majority of the respondents had already taken part in *Fuse* and therefore had previous contact with the organisers and the application process (12). However, eight had simply put forward a proposal to be involved and present their work. Seven participants had been contacted directly by the director and invited to submit / propose a piece, while five others had received information through other contacts/colleagues.

Exploring networks of knowledge & learning

The nature of festivals work & networks

The interviewees underlined the importance of a festival as a source of network activity, indeed it is a fundamental feature and almost hot-wired into their way of working. Some of the network dynamics are linked to the way in which a festival works (temporary clustering of performances and activities in a short-time frame). As the director of *Fuse* explains this also has a strong geographical connotation. For artists to attend a festival far away from where they are based requires great commitment of time and money. This means that close-

knit geographical networks are quite common. And is one of the reasons why most of the artists involved in *Fuse* are based in the South of England.

In particular, festivals – scheduled mainly across the summer – offer the opportunity for artists to showcase work for other festival directors (and other promoters) to see. This also means that attending any festival expands and stretches the network of each participating act, as this artist suggests

we also took this particular piece to the Emerge Festival [...] And that was really pivotal, actually. And the Emerge Festival gave us the link through for Fuse (Artist 7)

The festival ‘season’ and the fact that a limited amount of work tours to different festivals means that artists feel that they are part of a peripatetic community that meets over different weekends in different places so strongly connected to the cyclic cluster dynamics (Power and Jansson 2008). A few of the artists interviewed talked about a sense of community amongst street artists. Festivals fit perfectly (and in part contribute) to the networked and project-based nature of creative work and creative practice. Like other project-based activities, they tend to require the skills and collaboration of different people for a short-time. The ever-changing nature of creative companies involved is highlighted here by an artist.

It is a collaborative company really [...] there are about two or three regular members, but the cast and the collaborative teams have got about 30 people [...] I tend to work in a very collaborative way, reaching out to people where my skills are limited. (Artist 7)

While usually a company is only formed by one or a hand-full of staff, the number of people involved in collaborative work can expand it considerably. A distinctive characteristic of much creative work is the multi-tasking and multiple roles that sometimes have to be undertaken (i.e. someone defining themselves as Actor/Producer/Musician). This is definitely

the case with festivals as at different festivals (and sometimes even at the same festival) artists can take on different roles.

Fuse was different as I had [this piece], but also I worked with [name], who are a dance company, who were at Fuse. I directed their piece. So there were two pieces happening at the same time .It was the place that the two companies met [...] always at festivals, there is cross collaboration. (Artist 2)

Learning & expanding networks through Festivals

There were two key dimensions to the learning process. One was the learning derived from participating in the festival (this was specifically linked to project management, budgets etc.) and the other was learning derived from performing and working alongside other artists at the festival. With reference to the first aspect, a few artists – mainly the emerging companies – considered participating in the festival to be a learning opportunity from an administrative, planning perspective. As for the second dimension, artists interviewed highlighted how festivals can also be used as an opportunity to learn from other participating artists.

So going to festivals is where you get to showcase your work alongside acts from all over the world. And it really highlights the strength and weakness of particular work, technically, creatively so having them there as a marker, potential looking at what is on at the festivals, and using it as a guideline of what to produce (Artist 7)

Another important aspect of learning – which interconnected with the analysis of project working within the festival – is the possibility for artists to test their work at a festival.

we knew, we had a show and there were great bits in it and we would get applause but it needed work. [...] I mean it's just incredible when you are inside in a rehearsal space, and then you take it outside you think wow, is it the same show?, it looks totally different and the performers react in a totally different way (Artist 4)

Many artists mentioned that ideas and inspiration taken from a variety of artists and festivals influenced more broadly what they do

there is a street arts festival in Mexico and while I was there [...] there was a lot of walkabout and absurd costumes, and it made me really want to make something that was along these lines, so there was definitely an influence there [...] think that lots of little bits of every show have ended up in this, because of what I see (Artist 6)

In general artists show festivals as an opportunity to expand networks very different from theatre work because many artists are able to see each other's work and connect

A lot of festivals provide opportunities for our work to be seen by other artists [...] it is very important that Festivals provide something that theatres cannot do which is to pull together a group of different companies and artists and to allow them to all play at the same time and see each's others work (Artist 2)

This knowledge and awareness is considered by the artists themselves a key step towards knowledge sharing and possible collaboration. For some it was a chance to see others' work or pieces they heard of via other networks and events. However, these interactions can also turn into opportunities for future exchanges and mutual support. There is an evolution within the network but also within the collaborative work that can derive from the festival

for example there is another circus company and they are doing such a different things, there is two of them in that company as well, and the guy, one of them had pulled his hamstring, so I was his stand in last week (Artist 3)

Competition is not seen as an immediate threat by artists attending the same festival. In part this is because of a shared ethos but also because the artists and acts attending tend to be very different from each other.

Communality, sociality and connectivity: typology of networks in the festival creative ecology

If we take in consideration the framework offered by Grabher (2004, table 1) we can see the full range of different typology identified in connection with our analysis. However place seems to be a strong determinant in the strength of these relations and in particular in relation to the type of connections established with local directors and audiences, there seems to be a difference between local artists and visiting / touring artists.

Local Festival Director and artists: For local artists the connection to the local festival director is very important because it is based on the need to develop a possible long and collaborative opportunity. The Festival director considers part of his/her role to support local artists (and often there are specific funding streams involved). It is often a professional development view and that implies a long-term perspective on the artists/companies and their work. So it the relationship between local companies and a local festival director is more based on the idea of communality (see table 2 below)

It is about supporting local creative's and providing them with opportunities, [...] we also organised this year a regional platform which should give them an opportunity to showcase what they are doing. And we are also organising professional development sessions, (Festival director)

From touring/visiting artists there is more pressure in making the most out of connections with festival directors and that relationship cannot be as strong for all the festival directors the company works with – so it is more a sociality type of connection.

she saw us at Hat Fair [...] and I was really excited that she had come and I think the first show was booked up or something and I was thinking oh no we must try and get her in. She booked us from Fuse, she is a really important contact. We did manage to squeeze her in with her children (Artist 7)

As the Fuse Festival director explains it is very hard for emerging company to establish connections with Festivals' directors

You have to convince them to see your work, and then buy your work, and find a date. It is not easy, the bigger a company becomes in profile and recognition, its easier, but for an emerging company it is really hard to find a little place under the sun. (Festival director)

In general there was an awareness of the artists of the need to use festivals' directors as resources to tap into new network and new contacts in the sector – so a pressure towards establishing new connectivity type of networks was also mentioned.

Collaborating artists: By collaborating artists we mean here artists and other creative practitioners (such as puppeteers, choreographers etc) that get involved in the production / development of a festival piece rather than artists which are part of the companies delivering the performance. From the interviews it was clear that artists shared intense but brief relations with the collaborating artists involved. The length of the relationship was often linked to the fact that being a professional relationship money was an issue in allowing companies to have more professional feedbacks from experts and reputation was very important (so they tried to access the best possible collaborators for the task).

She is a fantastic physical comedian. And so I approached her and said would you come and work with us for three days. [...] I learnt so much out of those three days, to craft a score on that piece. [...] That was the nicest gift I have ever been given. (Artist 7)

Therefore these kinds of relationship are more based on short-term professional exchanges which are both connected to know-how of the person but also know-who (in terms of passing connections), so they generally sit between sociality and connectivity.

I mean the people we used as professional performers, were people that knew people, that knew people, that knew people that knew what Fuse was and may not have been

so keen if Fuse was not quite as well know or whatever, but I think it is like one big family, everyone knows everyone else, or is linked to someone else (artist 1)

However, in a few cases – especially with community-based projects – there was an aspiration to make these relations more long-term and based on shared value, so communality was seen as a possibility for some of these relations to develop.

I think this is the first we, or I have worked with performers in that way, managing performers. I found they were amazing, very keen, up for doing stuff you asked them to do, and just do things. They want the project to be as much as a success as you do, so they work with you and you work with them and it's a really nice relationship.

(Artist 1)

External Funders & Other Experts / Promoters: The relationship with external funders and other experts / promoters of the project seem to be quite clearly defined as professional – and therefore between the realm of sociality and connectivity. They both relate to a professional complementary but also a common interest and involve both know-whom and know-how.

The other good thing was a thing that happened at Fuse. We met [name], the guy that put our Arts Council funding bid through. [...]. I rushed over and shook his hand and thank him for putting through the bid [...]. To tell him a little bit personally, about the impact it has had on our practice and the opportunity to go on this amazing journey really, the making and creating it, but also it is an amazing journey you go on learning new skills (Artist 7)

Festivals function like a key meeting point as it relates to showcasing work and establish connections.

But also, at Fuse, we invited [arts programming officer] to watch and feedback, and at Hat Fair we had the Arts Council, [...] As well as about 3 or 4 others at Hat Fair that came to watch the show and that, really Hat Fair is where we preview a lot of work as it's a good place to get partners to come, as they usually are already coming [...] we had three French partners feedback on it (artist 2)

Other artists at Fuse: The relationship with other artists taking part at the festival is described by most as shifting between the real of communality and sociality. For some the communality is created by trust and common connections developed over time and by meeting at repeating events, described almost as a family

the more we have learnt is how open people are, and how helpful people are to each other [...] when you go from festival to festival it's more like seeing your family again, from weekend to the next weekend, you seem the same people (Artist 3)

For others the relationships that can develop at the festival are more linked to networks and reputation and are more career oriented

seeing different ideas is very interesting [...] say if you did want to do a collaborate, say if you were looking for, a different event with fireworks. You could see who was doing what in the Fuse festival and approach them (Artist, 1)

Festival audiences: As per with the connection with the local festival director, the relationship with local audiences and communities is different depending on whether the project is developed by local artists or visiting/touring ones. In the case of local artists the connection is more linked to communality and sociality, there is a sense of long-lasting connection and they seek to establish a relationship with audiences that might extend to future/other activities. There is also sense of trust in relaying on local group to contribute to a performance and common purpose that is developed.

we got a few emails from the group leaders and the teachers saying thank you so much and we would like to be involved next year, we got a lovely personalised card with pictures of our time in the school with the children, it was lovely (Artist 1)

Some of the artists also work with these audiences during the year, so there is also a connection with reputation and professional career there. This is slightly different for visiting /touring artists as the connection with the audiences is more task-oriented and weak, so more reflecting a connectivity type of connection but feedback is key to this type of connectivity.

In our show we are quite informal at the beginning and end of it, so we can go out and chat to the audience, and I think that is quite important. I love coming out and looking at their faces, and seeing you know, and having a chance to talk to people is really crucial (artist 7)

Table 2: Summary of types of connections between festival artists /companies and other key connections in the festivals ecosystem, based on Grabher (2004). The difference between local artists (*italics*) and visiting/touring is highlighted in the table when relevant.

	Communality	Sociality	Connectivity
Local Festival Director	<i>Strong relationship with local / important festivals</i> <i>willingness to develop a long-lasting relation</i>	Ephemeral (short) but intense relation with other festivals need to built on connections and reputation	Expanding towards new festival
Collaborating artists	some might become social over time	Expert coaching / Intense but brief support linked to reputation Common interest and professional ethos Importance of share know-how	
External Funders & Other experts /		Professional relationship linked to future career goals Can provide feedback	

promoters		related to expertise and know-how but also know who
Other Artists at Fuse	Shared common ideals / context Professional but also private relations Possible complementary knowledge / work importance of reputation / know who Often friendship and trust	Possibility of creating further connections (networks of networks)
Festival Audiences	<i>Mainly professionals but</i> <i>Part of developing long-lasting local partnership</i> <i>both relationship and career oriented</i>	weak connections professional interested in audiences feedback

Cross-referencing the categories identifies by Grabher (2004) allows us to identify changing dynamics and evolution in the relations between artists and local contest.

Conclusion

The paper has presented a specific case study of an emerging festival in the UK to highlight the evolving nature of creative networks and reflect on the value of temporary clusters in creating knowledge. In relation to the case study, the data has shown the role that a local festival can play in supporting artists and creative companies through commissioning new work and showing other works. This is particularly important for emerging companies and *Fuse* is recognised as a supporting partner in the development of new initiatives and new creative companies. However, the role of *Fuse* is not limited to the activities of a single festival but is part of a broader ecosystem of support which includes opportunities for artistic and professional development, a form of ‘interspace’ (Mar and Anderson 2012). In particular through encouraging companies to return to the festival and giving them long-term professional employment the festival has created a network of artists and companies. The festival can encourage experimentation by its artists and especially for young companies to

try out innovative ideas. Artists particularly value this opportunity as their shows are experienced as ‘work in progress’ for many months and taking part in the festival – as a process of learning by doing and learning by interacting – plays a key part in allowing them to get where they want to be artistically and professionally.

Furthermore, the results highlight that festivals can provide a good opportunity for artists to interact with each other and to learn from each other. While there is room for this kind of opportunity to grow further, overall it is clear that artists rely on the festival to learn, expand their networks and create more innovative work.

The paper considers the overlapping value of learning and collaborating within temporary clusters in the CCIs. It also reveals the temporary and explorative nature of many artistic practices and the learning taking place, involving audiences and other creative producers.

Secondly, it takes further the concepts of sociality, communality and connectivity developed by Grabher (2004) by adding an evolutionary perspective and considering how the character of the connection change over time but also in relation to geography and proximity.

Finally, the results highlight the key role played by the festival in supporting and commissioning artistic work. The way festivals are able to support emerging artists and provide them with a valuable opportunity to develop their work. This often involves risk with respect to commissioning new work and new artists, however, in an evolutionary perspective this can have a long-term impact in the development of city and regions that host and develop these events (Lindner and Meissner 2014). The paper could not explore fully this long-term impact but opens up opportunity for further research to move this direction.

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